

# Canine Bulletin

Nebraska Task Force - 1

December 2003



## Is POD Just Another FEMA Acronym?

Submitted by: Mike Agnew

There has been a lot of misunderstanding about the proper use of Probability of Detection (POD) and how we determine the percentage of coverage. Over the years I've heard POD described as anything from surface area covered to how well my dog worked the area. Don't get me wrong these may very well be an accurate description of the chance that they would have found what they were looking for. The fact of the matter is that we all need to be on the "same page" and be consistent so that when we do integrate with other Task Forces and their Search Team Managers that we are speaking and understanding the same language. This language is the assigned probabilities to our realistic assessment of our search effectiveness we believe has been accomplished in the search area.

Probability of Detection is the probability or chance, usually expressed as a percentage, that a clue (scent in our case) or subject will be or would have been detected (in retrospect) by the search action if a clue or subject was in the search area, as defined in Search is an Emergency, ERI, Fourth Edition. When we complete a search area and debrief, we are evaluating our performance in a given search area. We may say that we searched over this portion of the area but not this portion. We may also describe how well our dog worked at this given time. Our description may go something like this "Kenya worked pretty hard in this search site. I'm *fairly sure* she would have found some one here." This may very well be an accurate estimate given the experience of the handler/dog team and the difficulty of the area being searched. The Search Team Manager (STM) needs to take this information and quantify it for statistical analysis to determine whether or not the area should be searched again and by what resource with what POD. With this in mind we must transform the statement "fairly sure" into a numerical expression. By doing so the STM can use the numbers to express relative indications of probabilities and manipulate combinations of variables and calculate results of alternatives. In other words, you need numbers transformed into percentages to accomplish this, not abstract words.

The heart of this is estimating the POD, numerically, by the search team of a given search, in a given area, on a given day, as accurately as possible. Let me suggest a couple of guidelines:

1. Numbers, percentages, are relative expressions, not absolutes. Say you gave a 70% POD to an area you just searched. This number alone is meaningless. You must think of it as being relatively better than 60% but not as good as 80% (playing the odds or trade off)

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Jim McConnell and K9 Abby at Cavett Elementary School on November 26, 2003



## ***FEMA/NETF1 Canine Certification Application Process***

*Submitted by: Rick Klein*

In order to achieve FEMA Type I or Type II certification, handlers and canines must attend a FEMA-sanctioned canine certification test. FEMA-sanctioned certification tests are conducted by task forces across the United States on a regular basis. NETF1 canine teams are encouraged to attend certification tests that are conducted in the Central Division to control travel costs and stay closer to home in the event of task force activation. Certification tests are designed for canine teams that have prepared extensively for certification and have a high probability to succeed. These tests are not to be viewed as a training opportunity. NETF1 canine teams selecting to enter the certification process shall have met the following criteria:

1. Maintained monthly training logs and have submitted them quarterly as required by task force policy (Type I & II certifications)
2. Successfully passed a certification pre-test. (Type II certification)
3. Requested approval by the lead canine handler to enter certification process (Type I and II certifications)

**Upon receiving approval by lead canine handler, the canine team shall fill out and submit the following:**

FEMA Application for Certification - To be forwarded to the lead canine handler who shall review and send to the task force for TFL approval. TFL shall review and sign only after receiving approval by the lead canine handler. Upon approval, the task force shall forward the application to the certification test sponsoring organization contact via FAX or e-mail. The NETF1 lead canine handler shall be notified that application has been approved and a copy of the approved application shall be sent back to the applicant.

NETF1 Request to Attend - To be forwarded to the task force coordinator for travel/expense approval. All expenses for travel shall be approved prior to making any travel arrangements. Request to attend must include estimate of costs that will be incurred. Only costs that have been reported on the request to attend form are eligible for reimbursement. Specific approval is needed for rental of vehicles. Some task forces sponsoring certification tests provide local transportation.

In the event that a canine team should need to travel by aircraft, handlers should contact and survey the various airlines to make sure that the canine would be allowed on the aircraft. Some airlines are excluding or limiting the travel of search & rescue canines on many flights. Upon ascertaining that the canine can travel by air, NETF1 shall provide an official letter of travel for the canine. Each handler/canine team traveling by air should also have a current copy of the health status of the canine. Task force ID cards for both handler and canine should be carried along with other personal identification needed by the airline. NETF1 can provide task force ID cards, but will need current individual digital pictures of the handler and canine. Please allow one week to process the canine travel letter and/or ID cards so that we can get them to you in time for your travel. If you have any other questions regarding travel with your canine, please contact the lead canine handler.



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## 2. Turn abstract words into percentages

BET MY LIFE	.....	100%
I'M POSSITIVE	.....	90%
I'M SURE	.....	80%
I'M FAIRLY SURE	.....	70%
A GOOD CHANCE	.....	60%
IT'S 50-50	.....	50%
I THINK SO	.....	40%
COULD BE	.....	30%
MAYBE	.....	20%
PERHAPS	.....	10%
I DON'T KNOW	.....	0%

The statement above may then read "Kenya worked pretty hard in this search site. I'm 70% sure that she would have found someone here". Now STMs have a way to calculate, mathematically, POS, POA and what to do next. I hope that this clears up a lot of uncertainty about POD and take some stress off of you when faced with committing a result of your search. We all do the best we can and that is for certain.

A lot more information can be found in Managing the Search Operation, ERI or NASARs version (same book). You can also contact me for questions and comments at [brocandme@aol.com](mailto:brocandme@aol.com).

# How Do I Submit Items for the Canine Bulletin

Mail, E-mail, or Fax items to:

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Fax: 441-8292

Phone: 441-8352

Address/

Phone #

Changes Also  
contact Julie



Mail your  
training logs to:  
Susie Songster  
1801 "Q" Street  
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Happy  
Holidays!

